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“Shakespeare and Ecological Modernity: Wood, Glass, Gunpowder”  

Monday, 12 March 2018,  
4:00 p.m.  
Senior Common Room,  
Victoria College  
(rear of) 93 Charles St. West  

This talk will consider how Shakespeare connects early modern environmental history to ecological crises in the Anthropocene. The origins of some of today’s most urgent environmental problems – deforestation, fossil-fuel use, and the military industrial complex – can be traced to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Staging contextual representations of these trends, Shakespeare set up imaginative dialogues with spectators’ material lives and fostered new ecological awareness of the consequences of economic growth, personal consumption, and capitalized exploitation of the earth. In these moments of shared recognition, Shakespeare also points towards the folly of human aspirations to dominate the planet and today’s belated understanding of the biosphere’s long-term, infinitely complex sovereignty over us.


Image: Erhard Schön, “Two Landsknecht and Four Cannons.”  
Die Belagerung von Münster (1535)